CONSERVATION Showcase

Entrepreneur Eyes PMC Products

David Salman, president of Santa Fe Greenhouses, Inc. and *High Country Gardens* catalog, had heard about the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center from a well-known Santa Fe landscape designer but may not have expected what he saw when he visited in 2003.

"I was very impressed with the Plant Materials Center," said Salman. "I had received an invitation to the PMC Field Day that year, but couldn't make. I did go a few weeks later."

Salman immediately spotted two cultivars that stood out as ones he could use for ornamental horticulture applications. He has worked to incorporate them into his business since then.

Autumn Amber Three Leaf Sumac was noticed by Salman as an excellent alternative to spreading juniper. While not an evergreen it has an amazing abundance of chartreuse colored flowers in mid-spring and attractive glossy green foliage that turns an amber-yellow in the fall.

Autumn Amber and Salman's operations are a good fit, because Salman is always looking for native plants that are drought tolerant. This is also a good fit with the PMC because they are working to develop plants that conserve water and respond to New Mexico's challenging climate.

The second plant that caught Salman's eye was the Giant Sacaton Grass. Giant Sacaton was originally developed by the Plant Material Center for non-woody windbreaks in area vegetable fields. Breeding by the PMC has made a dramatic difference – resulting in a large grass that surpasses Pampas grass in stature and is much bigger and showier than its unimproved native forms.

"We need to use more natives in our landscaping, and Giant Sacaton is native," said Salman. "It can serve as a specimen plant, or used in a row to create a living fence or windbreak."

While the Plant Materials Center is striving to meet many conservation needs, in the course of its work pioneers like Salman are finding that some of the products do an outstanding job in the backyard as well as in the field. Private individuals like Salman are aiding conservation of our resources and environment through the development, use, and sale of such cultivars.